THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN EGYPT

Abel Raouf Abou Alam

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Introduction

Egypt is predominantly an agricultural country. Agriculture provides an occupational outlet for 63% of the population, which is estimated at 22,000,000. It also provides more than half of the country's total income, which was assessed in 1953 at $2.8 billion dollars, with a per capita income of about $120.

The cultivable land of Egypt is rather limited. There are at present 6 million acres under cultivation and it is estimated that 6 million more could be made cultivable by making use of the available water resources of the Nile.

In view of Egypt's large population, which is presently increasing at a rapid rate (about 2% per year), and its rather limited agricultural resources, it seems that agriculture, no matter how efficiently undertaken, cannot single-handedly bring about a decent standard of living for the country's masses. An alternative occupational outlet for the growing agrarian population through further development and wider expansion of the country's industry is deemed essential if the standard of living, already low, is to be kept from falling still lower.

Modern industry in Egypt had its beginning in the early part of the nineteenth century. Its role in the national economy has been gradually gaining importance, especially in recent decades.

The most important industries at present are textile, food processing, oil, cement, mining, construction and chemicals. The development of modern industry was instrumental in the development of modern trade unionism, which made its appearance in Egypt only in the latter part of the last century, following the downfall of the Guild system which had prevailed there for centuries.

In the following few pages will be given a brief outline of the development of modern trade unionism in Egypt; a summary of important labor legislation, as well as welfare and social security laws; an outline of the organization of the Egyptian Labor Department and an estimate of the role of the Egyptian labor in the international field.

I

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

1. *Early Period*

The Egyptian labor movement is as old as the history of Egypt, which goes back about five thousand years.

From early times, in ancient Egypt, there existed an identifiable working class. Workers were engaged in industry as well as in agriculture. The most important branches of ancient industry were transportation, mining, quarrying, building, glass manufacturing, spinning, weaving and ship building. Since all public works were carried out chiefly by the Government, the majority engaged in such occupations were government workers.

The urban workers were organized according to what may be called the "Guild System." The Guild was, in essence, an organization of master-craftsmen for the regulation and government of a trade. It usually included journeymen as well as masters, but it must not be conceived of as a joint body bringing together two distinct classes. The Guild trinity of masters, journeymen and apprentices stood, at first, for three stages in the life of the same individual, rather than for a distinction of classes. In theory, at least, the sole entry to the Guild was by way of apprenticeship. In due course the apprentice became a journeyman and thereafter, in time, he hoped to become a master. Mastership was the completion of the process, and the government of the Guild was vested in the masters.

During this early period, wages were paid mostly in kind. There existed, even then, many features of today's labor problems. For instance, housing of workers and settlement of strikes which were staged in protest against inadequate or overdue rations and other irregularities were of great concern to the Government, which established several agencies to cope with these and similar problems.

The Guild system managed to survive in Egypt for centuries under all kinds of rules, during which it changed but very little.

The impact of the industrial revolution, the French invasion of the country in 1799, the Westernization policy of Mohamed Ali and his followers from 1805 onward, and the birth of modern Egyptian industry, however, all contributed to the decline of the Guild system and the rise of modern trade unionism.

In 1890 the "Patenta Law" was passed. It gave all Egyptians the right to choose freely their work, thus depriving the Guilds of their inherited power and wrecking the very foundation of the Guild system.

2. *Period of Early Trade Unionism*

Modern industry in Egypt goes back to the early part of the nineteenth century, when Mohamed Ali started to develop cigarette, sugar, textile and other industries of the country. Meanwhile, successful attempts were made to encourage the investment of foreign capital. As a result, many industries were established and the number of workers increased.

Following the passage of the Patenta Law, and for a period of ten years, no labor organizations were formed to replace the craft Guilds. Soon, however, some labor unions came into existence among the better-paid workmen. These early unions, which mainly took the form of friendly societies, marked the beginning of modern trade unionism in Egypt.

In 1899, the first labor union, the Cigarette Workers Union, was organized following a general strike of the cigarette workers in Cairo. They struck against a reduction of 25% in piece rates and the introduction of labor-saving machinery in the industry. This was followed in 1903 by the formation of the Union of Employees of International Trade Firms. In 1908, two major unions were formed. One was the Tramworkers Union of Cairo; the other was the Handicraft Workers Union of the same city, with branches in various parts of the country. The latter Union expanded its activities and became active in the fields of cooperatives, education and politics. By 1911, Egypt had 11 unions with 7,000 members. However, because the early trade unions were few in number and weak in membership, they had little influence on labor-management relations. Working conditions were not favorable; hours of work were long and there were few laws to protect labor: the Decree of 1904 governing the licensing of "Dangerous, Inconvenient and Unhealthy Establishments," and the Law of 1909 aiming at the protection of juveniles in ginning, textile and tobacco factories. The latter covered a number of other industries later on.

3. *The First World War, and Post-War Period*

When the First World War broke out, Egypt's economy suffered a severe dislocation. Cotton and its products, which formed 90% of the country's exports, soon became difficult to export. The import of

industrial goods on which the country depended was cut off. To feed its population as well as the allied forces in the Middle East, and to overcome the difficulty of marketing its surplus cotton, Egypt revised its agricultural policy. It limited the area for cotton cultivation and increased the area to be cultivated in wheat. Furthermore, in order to provide local markets with needed goods, it encouraged the establishment and development of local industries. With this expansion of industry, the Government deemed it desirable to set up an agency to deal with its problems. In 1920 a Department of Commerce and Industry was established, and expanded in 15 years to become a separate Ministry in 1935.

Another important development during the war period grew out of the dependence of British military authorities on Egyptian unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labor, as well as on foreign labor, in their camps and working units. This labor shortage enabled Egyptian laborers to acquire specialized skills in certain fields. It also gave them the chance to work in close contact with foreign labor and learn much about the idea of trade unionism.

World War I can thus be appropriately considered a training period for Egyptian labor. Many of the workers of this period took a leading part in organizing Egyptian labor after the war.

The impact of the war on Egyptian labor was significant in other directions. Early in 1919, when the National Revolution started, workers were among the groups to protest vigorously against the British occupation.

While in an independent and fully sovereign country, labor activities aim chiefly at the betterment of conditions for the working class, the situation in foreign-dominated and freedom-aspiring countries imposes upon labor an added responsibility which it has to shoulder. The working class looks upon imperialism as its economic, as well as its political enemy, for in foreign-dominated countries, imperialism opposes complete industrialization and always regards the country as a source of raw materials as well as a market for its finished products. It is therefore natural that the working class should associate itself with all liberation movements. For in its endeavor to free the country from foreign domination, it is also furthering its own economic interests—hence the double objective of the Egyptian labor movement, the political and the economic, from its very beginning.

While occupied with the political problems of Egypt, workers did not forget to strive for their own betterment. Demands for recognition of trade unions, higher wages to meet the sharp rise in prices, shorter hours of work, severance pay, better working conditions, etc.,

were pressed by the labor unions. Strikes became widespread by the end of the second decade of the century and almost every industry in Egypt was affected.

To meet this general unrest, the Government in August 1919 established a "Conciliation Board" to study and handle all labor disputes. This board found time to probe existing labor and social conditions and arrived at certain conclusions which helped workers later on in their campaign for better legislation in these fields.

Workers' strikes during that period were not without benefit to the working class. Wages were increased from 100 to 125% over the pre-war level; hours of work were reduced, and better working conditions were obtained.

The trade union movement progressed rapidly and spread not only among industrial workers but also among other groups, e.g. teachers, journalists, physicians, Government employees, etc.

The post-war period witnessed the first attempt to bring workers into one general federation. In 1921, a General Federation of Labor was founded at Alexandria. Lack of organizing ability and mutual distrust led to a deadlock. Many other attempts have been made since, but none was completely successful.

From 1929 to the Second World War, Egyptian industry expanded and many new industries were established. As a result, the working population increased from about five million in 1927 to 7.4 million in 1937. The trade union movement was strengthened and the number of union members increased.

With the increase in their force, trade unions continued to campaign more vigorously for their aims, namely: the right to organize; the right to form a general federation of labor; shorter hours of work; and better working conditions. Moreover, a new trend in labor demands made its appearance: that was the demand for a comprehensive labor code covering all aspects of labor-management relations. In order to study the problem, Rida's Committee, named after the then Under-Secretary of Justice, was formed in 1927. Its main recommendation was the enactment of a comprehensive program of labor and social legislation. A quick result was the establishment in 1930 of a Labor Office in the Ministry of Interior. In 1931, a second committee, Kaisy's Committee, named after the then Minister of Justice, was established. In contrast to Rida's Committee, it advised that labor legislation be enacted gradually in accordance with prevailing conditions. The problem of gradualism versus comprehensiveness prompted the Government to consult the I.L.O. which sent Mr. Butler to Egypt in 1932. In his report, based on gradualism, Mr. Butler outlined a program of

labor and social legislation as well as one for the organization of a Labor Department. In 1935, the Labor Office was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and in 1939, it became a separate department in the newly-established Ministry of Social Affairs.

4. *The Second World War, and Post-War Period*

This period can well be considered a time of growth and development of organized labor in Egypt. It witnessed the official recognition of trade unions; a marked growth in the number of industrial workers and in the strength of their organizations; the enactment of a series of important labor and social laws, and the development of a closer relationship between Egyptian and foreign labor movements.

The Trade Union Act, which marked the first official recognition of trade unions, was passed in 1942. In the same year, aided by the pro-labor policy followed by the Government, 200 unions, representing 80,000 workers in industry, transportation, and commerce were formed. By 1946 these figures jumped to 488 unions with 95,538 members. By 1950, the number of unions did not show a significant change, but the number of union members had gradually increased to 149,424.

The post-war period witnessed the formation of many federations comprising trade unions whose members belong to the same occupation, the same trade, or trades engaged in the manufacture of the same products. Egypt had at the end of September 1953, 14 trade union federations with approximately 100,000 members, including federations of unions of maritime and engineering workers, petroleum workers and transport workers.

Up to 1952, all attempts to form a General Federation of Labor were unsuccessful. One of the obstacles in the way was the interpretation given to the Trade Union Act of 1942, namely that federations of unions engaged in the same industry were permitted under the law, but that a national federation was contrary to its provisions.

Late in 1952, amendments were made to three of the most important labor laws. According to the amendment of the trade union law the General Federation was not only permitted, but was officially encouraged. Among other things, these amendments gave agricultural workers and a few other labor groups the right to organize and bargain collectively. By the end of 1954 there were 64 unions of agricultural workers. During the postwar period, trade unions increased in number and a tremendous gain in total membership was effected. Accordingly the 1954 statistics estimated the number of trade unions at 1,120 and union membership at 450,000.

To help train trade union members, the Government established some trade union training centers. In these centers trade union leaders are given a course of lectures in all subjects relating to trade union organization and functions, including simplified economic principles which are indispensable as a background for collective bargaining in such areas as wages, cost of living, productivity, etc.

II

LABOR LEGISLATION

Egyptian labor legislation is comparatively recent. No labor laws of any significance were enacted before the 'thirties. Two main features characterize this legislation. First, it governs a wide scope of labor-management relations and fixes minimum standards for wages, hours of work, workmen's compensation for industrial accidents, etc. Second, it is not something imposed over and above the economic and social conditions of the country. It is rather an expression of these conditions. Gradualism is its distinguishing feature. Labor laws are enacted in a piece-meal fashion so as to meet certain needs at certain times.

Egyptian labor legislation is influenced, among other things, first: by the Higher Advisory Labor Council, which was established in 1935, and in which labor, management and government are represented. This Council has the right to examine all drafts of labor laws before they are submitted to the Parliament, and has the power to make whatever changes it deems necessary. Second: there is the influence reflected in the desire of the Egyptian Labor Department to bring labor legislation—as far as the economic and social conditions permit —up to the standard of I.L.O. recommendations and conventions.

Following is a list of the important laws which form the main body of Egyptian labor legislation:

1. Law No. 48/1933 regulating the employment of children of both sexes in industry
2. Law No. 80/1933 regulating women's labor
3. Law No. 147/1935 fixing hours of work in certain industries
4. Law No. 85/1942 relative to trade unions (amended in 1952)

5.	Law No. 86/1942	on compulsory insurance against industrial accidents
6.	Law No. 41/1944	on individual contract of employment (amended in 1952)
7.	Law No. 123/1944	concerning identity cards
8.	Law No. 72/1946	fixing daily hours of work in commercial establishments and clinics
9.	Law of 1948	on conciliation and arbitration in labor disputes (amended in 1952)
10.	Law No. 76/1950	on collective agreements
11.	Law No. 89/1950	on workmen's compensation for industrial accidents
12.	Law No. 117/1950	on compensation for occupational diseases
13.	Law No. 178/1952	on land reform, establishing minimum wages for agricultural workers
14.	Law No. 244/1953	organizing employment offices

The Trade Union Act of 1942, which recognized unions organized by industrial and commercial workers, stipulated that workers employed in one occupation, trade, or craft, or similar occupations, trades or crafts, may form unions to protect their rights and help improve their material and social conditions.

The individual contract of employment Act of 1944 provided for: 1) the protection of wages; 2) disciplinary penalties and their application; 3) annual holidays; 4) sick leave; 5) medical treatment and procuring of medicines; 6) cost of transport on the termination of the workers' contracts; 7) issue of a discharge certificate to the worker indicating the period he has worked and the nature of the work performed; 8) precautions against accidents; 9) indemnity for period of service; 10) relations between casual workers, labor contractors and employers; 11) food and housing for labor employed far from any town or village; 12) the utilization of funds accumulated from fines in social and beneficial aspects.

The Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1948 strengthened the legal element in conciliation and arbitration.

The Collective Agreement Act of 1950 legalized the right of unions to bargain collectively and regulated the machinery for collective contracts between employers and unions.

Because of defects and undue restrictions, significant amendments

were made in some of the above laws. In December of 1952, three of the most important of these labor laws, namely the Trade Union Law of 1942, the Individual Contract Act of 1944, and the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1948, were amended to bring about more favorable conditions.

Under the amendment to the Trade Union Act of 1942, workers are permitted to form a general federation of trade unions. Agricultural workers and some other groups are given the right to organize and bargain collectively. If the number of union members in any establishment exceeds three-fifths of the total number of workers in that establishment, the rest of the workers (two-fifths) will be by force of law members of the union.

Worth mentioning here are the provisions regulating the working conditions of women. In addition to the application of other labor laws to female workers, Law No. 80/1933, which is applicable in industry and commerce provides that women shall not be employed for more than nine hours daily, broken by a period of not less than one hour. Consecutive hours of work shall not exceed five. Women shall not be employed on night-work except in certain cases. They are entitled to a weekly rest period of not less than 24 consecutive hours. Every pregnant woman shall be entitled to absent herself from work one month before her confinement. She shall not be employed during a period of a fortnight after her confinement. Further, she shall be entitled to remain absent from work for an additional fortnight. Half of her wages shall be paid to her during the fortnight next following the confinement. The employer shall not dismiss a woman who absents herself from work during these periods. Also, it shall not be lawful to dismiss her owing to the prolongation of her absence from work on account of an illness certified medically as having arisen out of pregnancy or confinement, provided that the period of absence does not exceed three months in all. A woman who is nursing her child shall be entitled every day to two breaks of not less than half an hour each for this purpose for a period of eighteen months after confinement.

The law on individual contract of employment which specifies the rights and obligations of both parties (employers and workers) was also fundamentally amended. Annual paid vacations and wages during absence from work because of illness were provided and severance pay was increased.

The new amendment to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1948 legalized strikes and lockouts. Both workers and employers are free to go on strike or to lockout from the very beginning of any dis-

pute. But once the dispute is referred by either of the two parties to the competent Labor Office, strikes and lockouts are forbidden until the end of the legal procedure (conciliation or arbitration).

III

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining in Egypt is regulated by the Collective Agreements Act of 1950. However, the idea of collective bargaining was widely recognized and practiced long before the promulgation of the law.

The area where collective bargaining can operate in Egypt may be a little narrow in comparison with that in the United States. This is due to the fact that many aspects of labor-management relations which are not covered by American labor legislation, and are thereby left subject to collective bargaining, are covered by and specified in Egyptian labor legislation. The Individual Contract Act of 1952 covers annual holidays, sick leave, separation pay, wages during absence because of illness, etc., which, in the United States, are left to collective bargaining.

However, it must be emphasized in this connection that the labor rights indicated in Egyptian legislation are the minimum and that they can be improved through collective bargaining. According to Article 8 of the Collective Agreements Act: "Any clause of the collective agreement which is contrary to the provisions of the Act respecting individual contracts of employment shall be null and void unless such clause is more advantageous to the workers." According to that Act, a collective agreement may be concluded for a fixed period, or for the period necessary for the performance of certain specified work, but in neither case shall the period exceed three years. The collective agreement is applicable to all the workers in the establishment, including those who are not members of the union, provided that, at the time of concluding the agreement, not less than one-half of the workers in the establishment were members of the union and the provisions of the collective agreement are more advantageous to the workers than those of their individual contracts of employment.

If an establishment concludes a collective agreement with the trade union representing the workers in the branch of industry practiced

in it, the agreement shall be applicable only to those workers of the establishment who are members of the union, unless the number of such workers is more than one-half of the total workers in the establishment. In this case the agreement shall be applicable to all the workers, subject to the condition that its provisions are more advantageous to them than those of their individual contracts of employment.

Trade unions, or federations of unions, and employers who are not parties to a collective agreement may adhere to it after their registration. This adherence shall be effected following an agreement between the two parties applying for adherence. The consent of the original contracting parties shall not be necessary. The application for adherence, duly signed by the two parties, is then addressed to the Labor Department.

IV

INDUSTRIAL WELFARE

Industrial welfare and security of workers is also covered by Egyptian labor legislation. Following are some important highlights in this area.

In order to protect workers against accidents incurred during their work, the Industrial Accidents Act was passed in 1936 and then amended in 1950. It stipulates that ". . . every employee who incurs an injury in the course of, or arising out of his employment shall be entitled to receive compensation from his employer." The Act also states that the employer must provide first aid for an injured employee and must keep a first aid box in good condition, if he is employing more than 20 workers. Injured employees are entitled to free treatment in government hospitals. If there is no such hospital within 50 kilometers (31.3 miles), the employer must pay all medical, pharmaceutical and hospital expenses, provided that he chooses the medical practitioner and the hospital.

To help enforce the above law and to protect both employers and employees, the Industrial Accident Insurance Act was passed in 1942, requiring that: ". . . every employer shall be bound to cover by insurance his liability for payment of compensation for industrial accidents" and that ". . . employees who are covered by this Act shall not be required to pay the insurance premiums or any part thereof." This Act, however, gave the Minister of Social Affairs the right to

exempt some employers from its provisions provided they meet certain specified requirements.

Further still, the Individual Contract of Employment Act covers a wide range in the field of industrial welfare. It deals with sick leave, medical requirements and treatment, food, housing accommodations, etc. Then in 1950, Act Number 119 pertaining to compensation for occupational diseases was promulgated. According to the provisions of this Act, ". . . any employee suffering from any of the diseases enumerated in the list attached to this Act shall be entitled to compensation from the employer . . ." The Act also specifies that the employer shall be held responsible for compensation within one calendar year from the date on which the worker's service terminated.

Meanwhile, a large number of establishments have, in the last twenty years, organized services for their workers by establishing welfare and medical centers, restaurants offering meals at nominal prices, playgrounds and swimming pools. Furthermore, a group of employers has recently made an agreement with a hospital to devote its rooms, beds, doctors and amenities exclusively to their workers and employees.

A special survey of 150 establishments employing more than 100 workers undertaken in 1951 by the Labor Department has shown that they provide their workers, totalling 125,000, with social and medical services above the level laid down by legislation.

V

PRODUCTIVITY

The problem of labor productivity has claimed the special attention of Egyptian authorities. Although the net output per Egyptian worker is low compared with that of workers in highly industrialized Western countries (in 1945 it was one-third that of the United Kingdom), it is still the highest in the Middle East. Scarcity of modern machinery, inefficient management, and inadequate vocational training and supervision are some of the reasons for the Egyptian workers' low productivity.

In consultation with I. L. O. experts, a Productivity and Vocational Training Center has been set up. This center was inaugurated in August 1954 and is actually operating under the supervision of five I. L. O. experts in accordance with the Technical Assistance Agreement

concluded between the Egyptian Government and the International Labor Office. A decree was issued on the 4th of November 1954 establishing a Higher Council for Productivity and Vocational Training. The main functions of that council are:

1) Supervision and coordination of all efforts, either Governmental or non-Governmental, in the field of productivity and vocational training;

2) Planning schemes and general policies aiming at raising the productivity level of Egyptian industrial and agricultural activities.

3) Encouraging and assisting productivity and vocational training projects carried out by private establishments. This will include financial and technical assistance.

4) Keeping in contact with the international organizations interested in vocational training and productivity with the aim of disseminating the results reached by these organizations. The Council suggests the measures necessary to apply the vocational training and productivity schemes in Egypt. Special care will be given to the introduction of the different types of vocational training, including technical apprenticeship, foremen and instructors' training, and the establishment of special centers for the purpose of training unemployed youth and unqualified workers.

VI

LABOR ADMINISTRATION

The Labor Department

The Labor Department constitutes one of the main departments in the Ministry of Social Affairs, and is charged with the responsibility of handling all labor questions. Its history goes back to 1930 when a Labor Office was established in the Ministry of Interior. In 1935, this office was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and then in 1939, following the formation of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the office became one of the new Ministry's important departments.

The Labor Department now comprises the following four main administrations:

1) Industrial Relations Administration, dealing with industrial relations in general and including the following four subdivisions:

a. Trade-unions section
b. Workmen's compensation section
c. Conciliation and arbitration section
d. Legal and registration section

2) Manpower Administration, dealing with all that concerns manpower organization and covering the following four sub-divisions:

a. Employment and unemployment section
b. Vocational training section
c. Migration section
d. Identity cards section

3) Inspection administration, dealing with all types of labor inspection, and covering three sub-divisions:

a. Labor inspection section (supervising the execution of labor laws in general)
b. Industrial Safety section
c. Medical section

4) Public Relations Administration, dealing with all other functions related to research, statistics, international relations, social welfare and publication.

The Labor Department has also a system of labor attaches in some industrial countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and France, and is planning some in neighboring countries where Egyptian workers with certain skills are hired.

The Egyptian Government is also planning to establish an office for a permanent delegation to the European Section of the United Nations in Geneva, dealing with relations with the International Labor Office and other international organizations whose main offices are located in Europe.

The Higher Advisory Labor Council

On the legislative side, there is an Advisory Labor Council, to advise the Labor Department on labor legislation. This Council, which is formed from representatives of government, labor and management, was set up in 1935. It has been reorganized, however, several times, the last of which was in December 1953. It is presided over by the Minister of Social Affairs. All draft labor laws must be studied and discussed by this Council before being submitted to Parliament. The Council has the power to make whatever changes in these drafts it deems necessary.

The Council is formed as follows:

1) Six members representing employers as follows—4 representatives for the Egyptian Federation of Industries, 1 representative for Cairo Chamber of Commerce, and 1 representative for the Egyptian Agriculture Association;

2) Six members representing workers as follows—4 representatives of industrial workers, 1 representative for commercial workers, and 1 representative for agricultural workers;

3) Fifteen members representing the different government ministries, departments and councils as follows: Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Social Affairs; Deputy Chairman of the Cultural and Social Branch of the Council of State; Under-Secretaries of State for Finance and National Economy; for Industrial Education; for Military factories; for Commerce and Industry; for Agriculture; for Public Works; for the Interior; for Municipal and Rural Affairs; Director General of Egyptian State Railways; Director General of Labor Department (Rapporteur); A representative of the Permanent Council for Social Services; A representative of the Permanent Council for National Production.

Settling Labor Disputes

Labor courts for handling labor disputes are being established in different regions of the country. It is hoped that by the end of this year the required number of such courts will be attained. The courts will shorten the time usually taken in settling labor disputes and they are certainly a practical step in that they provide competent judges and referees for handling differences between labor and management.

VII

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Egyptian labor laws have never restricted international affiliation. Thus, Egyptian labor has always been in close contact with most of the international activities in the field of labor. In the early 'thirties, a delegation of Egyptian trade unionists attended the conference of the International Trade Union Federation in Madrid. In 1946, another

Egyptian delegation attended the first conference of the World Federation of Trade Unions, which was held in Paris. Again in 1949, two Egyptian trade unionist observers attended the first conference of the ICFTU in London. No final decision was taken, however, with respect to the membership of Egyptian labor in any of these federations. This may be accounted for by the lack of a central labor organization which has the authority and power to make such a decision.

Since Egypt became a member of the I. L. O. in 1936, Egyptian labor has been in close contact with that organization. It is represented in Egyptian delegations which attend the conferences of this international labor organization and on many of the organization's technical committees, in which Egypt participates.

Egypt has ratified eleven I. L. O. conventions. They are: number 19, relating to equality of treatment in accident compensation; number 41, relating to the employment of women in night work; number 45, relating to the employment of women in mining; number 53, relating to the qualifications of merchant navy captains, officers, and seamen; number 63, relating to statistics of wages and working hours in mines and major industries including construction, engineering and agriculture; number 80, relating to the amendment of the constitution of the I. L. O.; number 2, concerning unemployment; number 11, concerning the association and combination of agricultural workers; number 52 concerning annual holidays with pay; number 88, concerning the organization of the employment service; and number 98, concerning the application of the principles of the right to organize and to bargain collectively.

Provisions are being made for the ratification of other I. L. O. conventions. Continuous efforts are also being made by the Labor Department toward the adoption of new measures that make further ratification possible.

Meanwhile, Egyptian labor has developed closer ties with labor in the neighboring Arab states and other Middle East countries. These ties have been strengthened by the labor activities of the Arab League and by the Middle East regional conferences which are held under the auspices of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

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